

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*****SBI net: Does it Pass the Border Security Test?
Part II***

June 17, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism and Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight joint hearing entitled *SBI net: Does it Pass the Border Security Test? Part II*:

“In 2006, the Department of Homeland Security announced its plan to install technology along the southwest border that would serve as a virtual fence and provide Border Patrol with the information it needs to secure the border.

Four years and one billion dollars later, we are still without the plan that was originally envisioned.

To make matters worse, this was not our first opportunity to get this right.

Two former border technology programs – the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System (ISIS) and the American Shield Initiative (ASI) – were eliminated due to mismanagement and equipment failure.

The third time, as they say, was supposed to be a charm.

This Committee’s oversight, along with the report that GAO will release at today’s hearing, indicates otherwise.

Regrettably, the partnership between DHS and Boeing has produced more missed deadlines and excuses than results.

When Boeing was awarded the SBI net contract in 2006, we were told that SBI net technology would be deployed along 655 miles of the southwest border in Tucson, El Paso, and Yuma by the end of 2008, to help the Border Patrol gain operational control of the southwest border.

Four years later, and two years beyond the original deadline, SBI net technology is only being deployed along 23 miles in what is called Tucson-1 and 30 miles along what is referred to as Ajo-1 totaling a mere 53 miles; which is a far cry from 655.

According to my calculations, that equals nearly \$20 million per mile.

Furthermore, the capability of what is being deployed along those 53 miles is far less than what was originally expected.

The original plan was to approve equipment that met a threshold of 95% for detecting and identifying items of interest that crossed the border.

When it was determined that the system in place would not meet that standard, instead of attempting to improve what we had, Boeing and the Department lowered the standard to 70%.

As we learned in our last hearing on this issue, this same type of numbers game was also used when the system was tested.

As a result, I have little to no confidence in the usability of this system, despite its exorbitant cost.

I am convinced that DHS and Boeing grossly underestimated the task of standing up SBInet.

I am pleased that the Secretary is conducting an evaluation of SBInet's future, including Boeing's performance under its contractual obligations.

I would urge the Department to continue to look to the innovation of this great country for border security technology, as opposed to continuing to use taxpayer dollars on a system that does not live up to our expectations. "

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